

Down to an art: MKAF makes the connection at DMS

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Destin Middle School's fifth-grade French and Fine Arts program got a splash of brilliance from The Mattie Kelly Arts Foundation in a collaboration "to enrich the program and make it unique to our county."

"I had no idea the quality and depth the program was going to take," said Leah McGill, a certified teacher and education director of MKAF. Once a month, from September to May, local artists donated their talents to the program by visiting Carmen Patterson's classroom to give a presentation to the students.

The 10 and 11-year-olds

got an exclusive look at the worlds of art history, music, literature, visual arts, architecture, culture, publishing and cooking with chocolate.

Back in September, McGill and local artist Eva Markham kicked off the year of "bringing language and the arts together" with a segment on Picasso.

The program got musical in October when the Destin Charity Wine Auction Foundation funded an appearance by singer/songwriter Lorna Bracewell. She showed the students some surprising similarities in folk music and hip hop by free-styling on her guitar.

Destin Charity also sponsored November's literary adventure with a vis-



GOT THE ACTING BUG?

MKAF will host Missoula Children's Theater Camp, bringing a production of "Beauty Lou and the Country Beast" at Destin United Methodist Church Life Center. A ticketed public performance will be held on Friday, June 12 at 6 p.m. For more information, call 650-2226.

it from published children's author Adrian Fogelin.

December brought the gift of art instruction from acrylic/mixed media artist Linda Kernick. She

showed students how to create art on canvas with some unconventional tools and techniques.

The MKAF French and Fine Arts Connection, as

the program is properly called, got the students thinking in three dimensions when Architect Lynn Dugas showed the students how basic shapes were used to design big city high rises in January.

McGill said their goal all along was to create a world class experience. In March, Destin composer David Ott taught the students how persistence is the key to finding their gift and honing in on it for success.

Ott's act was followed in April by Lisa Burwell of VIE Magazine, who gave the students a chance to be published in an upcoming issue with a contest to draft an article about how students can make a difference in the world.

The grand finale was

a sweet presentation by Paul and Kirsten Nykamp of Kilwin's Chocolate on chocolate's history, fun facts and an activity where the students made their own treats in class.

"That was by far their favorite," Patterson said. McGill said that most of the talent will return next year for the program, and she hopes to add a photographer and a potter to the lineup.

Each visitor was pleasantly surprised by the knowledge base the fifth-graders already had on art and music history. It kept the professionals on their toes.

"That's why it's important that the caliber we invite into this program meet the standards," McGill said.

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Date: Thursday, June 11th
Location: The Sheraton Four Points on Okaloosa Island
8:30 am — 10:30 am

Space is limited so please RSVP today!
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Breakfast is Provided